

A photograph of two men in business attire shaking hands in an office. The man on the left is wearing a light blue striped shirt and dark trousers. The man on the right is wearing a blue shirt and a dark tie. They are standing in front of a large window with a brick wall and arched openings. The background is slightly blurred, showing a desk with papers and a pen.

How to Build a Respectful Workplace

Prepared by:
D. Albert Brannen
Fisher & Phillips LLP

LORMAN[®]

Published on www.lorman.com - March 2019

How to Build a Respectful Workplace, ©2019 Lorman Education Services. All Rights Reserved.

INTRODUCING

Lorman's New Approach to Continuing Education

ALL-ACCESS PASS

The All-Access Pass grants you **UNLIMITED** access to Lorman's ever-growing library of training resources:

- ☑ Unlimited Live Webinars - 120 live webinars added every month
- ☑ Unlimited OnDemand and MP3 Downloads - Over 1,500 courses available
- ☑ Videos - More than 1300 available
- ☑ Slide Decks - More than 2300 available
- ☑ White Papers
- ☑ Reports
- ☑ Articles
- ☑ ... and much more!

Join the thousands of other pass-holders that have already trusted us for their professional development by choosing the All-Access Pass.



Get Your All-Access Pass Today!

SAVE 20%

Learn more: www.lorman.com/pass/?s=special20

Use Discount Code Q7014393 and Priority Code 18536 to receive the 20% AAP discount.

*Discount cannot be combined with any other discounts.

How to Build a Respectful Workplace

By D. Albert Brannen

There is honor and dignity in work. Successful employers understand this axiom and build workplaces where their employees are respected. As a result, they experience lower employee turnover, less employment-related litigation and fewer problems caused by meddling unions. Their employees are also happier and more productive. This article outlines 10 tips for building a respectful workplace and reaping these benefits.

1. Practice the Golden Rule

The Golden Rule says to treat others as you expect to be treated. Employers should treat their employees with the same level of respect and appreciation as they want from employees. On the other hand, employers who disrespect their employees will not get the most out of them. Their employees will be less productive, less loyal and be more likely to turn to an outside union to represent them against the employer.

2. Walk the Talk, Don't just Talk the Talk

It is not enough for employers to have the proper policies or to say the right things to employees. Employees are smart enough to understand when employer actions are not consistent or in conflict with their written or spoken words. In fact, courts even recognize that when a manager's "actions" undermine the employer's policies on harassment, discrimination or retaliation, the actions control and the employer loses certain affirmative defenses that might have otherwise been available for the organization to avoid or at least reduce its liability.

3. Lead By Example

Another way to say "walk the talk" is to lead by example. In history, the greatest generals led their troops from the front. They never expected of their troops anything more than they were willing to do in battle. In the workplace, managers should lead by example and never expect anything of their employees that they are not committed to doing themselves. When leading by example, managers build their own credibility with employees and gain their respect.

4. Spend Time With Employees Every Day and Be Accessible

To fully understand employee perspectives and be aware of changing employee sentiments, managers need to spend time with employees and to be accessible every day. Accessibility gives employees confidence that their manager will be available to help resolve any job-related issues if or when they arise. It may also help the manager spot early warning signs of union activity or employee claims of mistreatment, favoritism, discrimination, harassment or retaliation.

5. Be Empathetic

Employees have unique concerns, goals and interests. Often times, those concerns, goals and interests are not the same as their managers. In fact, they can be quite different. Professor Kenneth Kovach of George Mason University has spent decades trying to help supervisors understand the differences between rank and file employees in an effort to help supervisors better manage their direct reports. A key element in appreciating "where employees are coming from" is for managers to have empathy for their employees.

6. Establish Formal Communication Channels

At a minimum, employers need to have the right formal communication channels in place. Formal channels may include, among others, group meetings and written communications such as informative websites, Intranets, newsletters or letters to employees' homes about important news employees and their families should know. More sophisticated formal channels may include skip-channel meetings, hotlines or 360 degree reviews. Having these types of channels in place objectively signals to employees that their employer respects its workers enough to keep them informed and to listen to them.

7. Keep Commitments

Making promises or commitments to employees and then failing to follow through on them is a sign of disrespect. Managers do not have to solve every employee grievance or concern—but if a response or specific action is promised, the manager must deliver.

8. Tell Employees What You Want

Employees respect bosses who honestly tell staff what is expected of them. When managers sugarcoat or dance around problems, or fail to take decisive action, they lose the respect of their employees. Likewise, when companies keep employees “in the dark,” it breeds disrespect and distrust of the employer.

9. Don't Surprise Employees

Employees hate surprises like sudden changes in assignments, schedules, mandatory overtime or terminations. When employers spring changes on employees without adequate notice, it signals a blatant disregard and disrespect for the fact that employees have lives and obligations outside of the workplace.

10. Expect The Best From Employees

Employers that expect the best from their employees and believe in their ability to succeed, generally invest more resources in them. This type of supportive, positive work environment tends to manifest the employer's genuine respect for its employees. Likewise, staff members tend to reciprocate with more respect for their employers.

Conclusion

Employers must work hard to create and sustain a respectful work environment. Respect does not come easy and it can be lost in a second. But when employees believe their employer respects them, they are more likely to succeed at their jobs and ultimately they create fewer practical and legal problems for their employer.

D. Albert Brannen is Managing Partner in the Atlanta office of Fisher & Phillips LLP, a national law firm which represents employers in labor, employment, employee benefits, business immigration, workplace safety and civil rights matters. He can be reached at dabrannen@laborlawyers.com or 404-240-4235

The material appearing in this website is for informational purposes only and is not legal advice. Transmission of this information is not intended to create, and receipt does not constitute, an attorney-client relationship. The information provided herein is intended only as general information which may or may not reflect the most current developments. Although these materials may be prepared by professionals, they should not be used as a substitute for professional services. If legal or other professional advice is required, the services of a professional should be sought.

The opinions or viewpoints expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of Lorman Education Services. All materials and content were prepared by persons and/or entities other than Lorman Education Services, and said other persons and/or entities are solely responsible for their content.

Any links to other websites are not intended to be referrals or endorsements of these sites. The links provided are maintained by the respective organizations, and they are solely responsible for the content of their own sites.